

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
January 31, 2008
Room W130, West Office, Building, State Capitol Complex**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Dennis Stowell, Co-Chair
Rep. Ben Ferry, Co-Chair
Sen. Margaret Dayton
Rep. Roger Barrus
Rep. Jack Draxler
Rep. Carl Duckworth
Rep. Kerry W. Gibson
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. John G. Mathis
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. Steve Sandstrom

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Mike Dmitrich
Sen. John Valentine

STAFF: Ivan Djambov, Fiscal Analyst
Linda Service, Committee Secretary

Note: A list of visitors and a copy of handouts are filed with the committee minutes.

Rep. Ferry brought the meeting to order at 2:17 p.m.

Division of Wildlife Resources: Analyst Presentation

Ivan Djambov, Fiscal Analyst, presented the Budget Brief - Division of Wildlife Resources. DWR manages all fish and wildlife species, regulates hunting, fishing, and trapping, and conducts non-consumptive activities. The Department of Natural Resources has formed a multi-agency team, including federal, state, and local partners and is requesting funding to implement a plan of action to prevent invasion of Quagga and Zebra mussels. The Analyst recommends the Subcommittee place on the priority list the following request for appropriation from the General Fund: 1) a \$1,106,500 supplemental appropriation for FY 2008; and 2) a \$1,640,000 ongoing appropriation for FY 2009.

DWR is requesting funding to expand the Walk-In Access Program which has been tested in a pilot program in the northern region. Willing landowners were compensated for allowing access to the public to fish and hunt on private properties. The Analyst recommends the committee provide an ongoing appropriation of \$450,000 from the GFR - Wildlife Resources account.

The Division is requesting funding to acquire a new boat to manage brine shrimp on the Great Salt Lake. The request is for a supplemental appropriation of \$280,000 from the GFR - Wildlife Resources account for FY2008. The Analyst recommends the Subcommittee fund this request.

Two years ago the Springville hatchery was diagnosed with Whirling Disease due to infected water sources. The Division has developed a process to bring clean water into the hatchery but funding would be needed to build covers over the raceways to protect the water sources. The Analyst recommends the Subcommittee provide for FY 2008 a supplemental appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the GFR - Wildlife Resources for the design and construction of the raceways covers .

The Analyst is supportive of \$525,000 ongoing funding for public access of hunters and fishers on SITLA lands. He responded to questions from the committee.

Budget Brief - Wildlife Resources Capital. The Wildlife Resources Capital budget includes large structural projects or habitat improvements and projects that improve wildlands or related structures. The Analyst recommends for the Wildlife Resources Capital line item for FY 2009 a base budget appropriation of \$11,755,000, with \$800,000 from the General Fund. He does not recommend any supplemental appropriations for FY 2008.

Budget Brief - Range Creek. Range Creek Valley was once the site of numerous Fremont Indian villages hidden in the Book Cliffs of Emery County. DWR has ownership to this area and receives appropriation to manage and secure the property. The Analyst recommends the Legislature consider adopting for FY 2009 for Range Creek line item a base budget of \$164,600 from the General Fund. He does not recommend any supplemental appropriations for FY 2008.

Budget Brief - Wildlife Resources Reimbursement. DWR is required to request General Funds from the Legislature to reimburse the Wildlife Resources Restricted Account, a sum equal to the fees that were lost by the mandated issuance of free/reduced price licenses. The Analyst recommends for the Wildlife Resources Reimbursement line item for FY 2009 a base budget appropriation of \$74,800 from the General Fund. He does not recommend any supplemental appropriations for FY 2008.

Budget Brief - DWR Cooperative Agreement. This line item accounts for spending on studies done by DWR in cooperation with federal and local government agencies or other entities. The agencies supply the funding and DWR provides field teams to conduct the studies. The Analyst recommends for the Wildlife Resources Cooperative Environmental Studies line item for FY 2009 a base budget appropriation of \$5,368,600. He does not recommend any supplemental appropriations for FY 2008.

Budget Brief - DWR Predator Control. Wildlife Resources is statutorily required to contribute to the Department of Agriculture's Predatory Animal Control program. DWR is required to request in its annual budget funds equal to 25 percent of the amount of fees and contributions deposited in the Agricultural and Wildlife Damage Prevention Account. The Analyst recommends for the Wildlife Resources Predator Control line item for FY 2009, a base budget appropriation of

\$59,600 from the General Fund. He does not recommend any supplemental appropriation for FY 2008.

Budget Brief - DWR Contributed Research. This line item accounts for public contributions to improve wildlife. It does not include contributions from the non-game check-off, which are included in the DWR operations budget. The Analyst recommends for the Wildlife Resources Contributed Research line item for FY 2009, a base budget appropriation of \$355,600. He does not recommend any supplemental appropriations for FY 2008.

The Analyst discussed the Issue Brief - Wildlife Resources - Fees. There are no major changes. A committee discussion followed. Greg Sheehan and Jim Karpowits with the Division of Wildlife Resources responded to questions of committee members.

Agency Presentation

Director Karpowits presented a long-term perspective of the value of wildlife and what has happened to wildlife in the state over the last 30 years. Wildlife has increased both in number and in kind which improves land value, business opportunities, and quality of life. Utah continues to receive both regional and national recognition for its innovative and progressive fish and wildlife programs. In addition to receiving an adequate budget, there are two reasons the Division has been successful: 1) great employees, and 2) great partnerships and volunteers. The Division is aware of major issues and challenges and has a plan of action to address them. Director Karpowits spoke specifically to the Division's Walk-in Access Program, the battle against invasive plants near the Great Salt Lake, the threat of invasive mussel species, and the effect of license restructuring on license sales and hunt applications. He responded to questions and concerns of the committee. Jim Carter of the Utah Anglers Coalition and Strawberry Anglers Association and Bill Fenimore of the Audubon Council spoke in support of funding for the Division and the work being done.

Endangered Species Expenditures Report: Reed Harris

Mr. Harris from the Species Recovery Program of the Department of Natural Resources presented an expenditure report of the Endangered Species Mitigation Fund. The Fund can be used to manage sensitive species to avoid being federally listed, along with resolving difficult endangered species issues. He reviewed three programs: Virgin River Program, June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program, and Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. A committee discussion followed. Mr. Harris responded to committee questions and concerns.

Prairie Dog and Sage Grouse Issues: Terry Messmer and Wayne Smith

Wayne Smith, Iron County Commissioner, elaborated on the need for funds to resolve prairie

dog issues and develop a sensible and logical habitat plan to control the population. There is a coalition in place with a plan of action but funds are necessary. Randy Johnson, a consultant for Iron County, explained the challenge Iron County is experiencing with regard to habitat management. There is a need to find a way to combine a good habitat management plan with legislation dealing with private land issues. The problem goes beyond Iron County and will involve participation at the federal level.

Terry Messmer of Utah State University, summarized activities that have been ongoing by local working groups to monitor and report the effect of management actions on sage-grouse and other at risk species. The sage-grouse population in the state is stable to increasing. The key to making decisions regarding sage-grouse or any other species, is documenting whether the actions we are taking are addressing the threats.

MOTION: Rep. Gowans moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:28 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Rep. Ben Ferry, Co-Chairman

Sen. Dennis Stowell, Co-Chairman